

1946

## UA3/2/4 Gallatin County Commencement Speech

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Men and women of Gallatin county we are gathered here tonight to do honor to the most precious possession of your homes, these boys and girls before us. The wealth of your county in natural resources of land and the like is fixed; your wealth in manhood and womanhood alone is susceptible of change. All increase in value must come thru education and your belief in education is manifested by this fine group of graduates before us tonight.

Members of the graduating class I congratulate you tonight for many reasons:

I congratulate you first of all that you have had the courage to stick to the task before you until you had completed it. To win in the game of life you must be willing to stick to the job.

I congratulate you on being born in the United States of America with its equality of opportunity for all whether you come from a wealthy or a poor family, from a magnificent or a humble home; a country which has led the world to a new conception of national ideals in its protection of weak nations, in its expenditure of money for the improvement of living conditions in its island possessions; a country which having been granted an indemnity for expenses incurred in the Boxer rebellion would say "take back your money and use it to educate your own; a country which would spend millions on Cuba and then say " Go, you are free to work out your own destiny so long as you maintain a responsible government; a country which has waged five wars for principle and not one for purposes of oppression or

territorial aggrandizement.

I would congratulate you that you were born in Kentucky the home of great men, blessed with boundless natural resources, and that your home is here in Gallatin county where the homely virtues<sup>2</sup> brotherly love and friendship yet abide.

I congratulate you most of all on the loving care and sacrifices of mothers and fathers, some of whom were denied your opportunities, which have made it possible for you to stand here tonight. Do not forget the debt you owe them, and make your lives such that they may continue to be proud of you and that as the shades of the evening of life close about them you may be their pride and joy and comfort.

Mothers, I know the joy that is in your hearts tonight as your sons and daughters are here before you. It seems but yesterday I know that you fixed them up and started them out to school for the first time. You were proud then and yet there was sorrow in your hearts because they were taking one of the steps away from you and would never be your own in quite the same way again. And tonight it is the same. You are happy that they have completed the common school course and yet you are sorry that they are getting yet a little farther from your love and care.

Boys and girls, I know not from what schools you come. Some from modern buildings I know and some from the little one room schoolhouse on the hill. Oh the memories that come thronging as we older folks think of



the old schoolhouse which we attended. Its outside weatherbeaten; the weatherboarding ripped off here and there, its interior showing traces of the ravages of jackknives on desks and walls and the ceiling bearing mute witness to skill in the manufacture and casting of paper wads.

And yet a glamour as of fairy land hangs round it as we see ourselves of yesterday sitting near the dainty miss we fancied and read again in memory the note she handed us that day bearing the poem than which Shakespeare never wrote a finer "when this you see remember me tho we are many miles apart. Tho others have my company you may have my heart".

The trips to the spring for water, the games of anty over, skip-to-my-lou- prison-base and base ball that we had! Some time since where I was entertained the hostess asked each for his most embarrassing experience. I was talking to the host so was excused but I knew well what it was. It happened at the old school house beside the road. I was the proud possessor of a new pair of pants (not trousers, pants). My mother had buttoned them upon me with loving care and sent me forth rejoicing. I was proud in realization of my elegance. I was at bat. The ball came hard and fast straight at my head. I stooped low. There was a ripping sound. I pretended not to hear it. The ball was returned and came again. I struck it and sped toward first base. The breeze confirmed my worst fears and as first base lay by the roadside I sped on down it making a real home run bearing the divided remains to my mother. The agony of shame and humiliation is with me yet after twenty years and to crown it all

my teacher called me up next day and said, "Paul, you must never leave the grounds without permission."

And now young folks that you have reached this milestone along our educational highway I would urge upon you the importance of further progress. The road leads on thru high school and college and professional training school. . . Kentucky, America, the world needs men and women but most of all it needs trained men and women. If Jesus of Nazareth could spend almost all of his life in preparation for <sup>the few short years of</sup> his ministry you need not be afraid to take time for your preparation for life and if he in the brief time of his labors could change thru his influence the ideals of mankind, you need not fear that you are losing opportunities by thorough preparation. Life is measured not in years but in accomplishments.

What are you supposed to have gained from your schooling and what may you hope to gain from further education? What are the aims of education as we interpret them today?

Suppose we say first of all to secure information. Reading, writing and arithmetic you are supposed to have mastered to the extent that they are familiar tools which you are trained use with ease and skill in the pursuits of life. Some knowledge of the sciences and history you have acquired but you have but skimmed the surface of the great field of human knowledge, it stretches before you like an expanse of golden grain, yours for the harvest. I would have you learn for the joy of knowing. the history of past peoples and the accomp-



lishments of men in every field of endeavor during past ages, as well as for the practical benefit to you in life.

Second- education will help you to earn a living.

For every day spent in common school, in high school and college, unless you are an exception to the rule, you will receive good wages thru an increase in income. You are to compete with trained minds and to win tomorrow in the battle of life you must be trained. As to position and honor statistics show that only  $\frac{1}{2}$  of 1% of our population graduate from college and yet from that number have come half our Presidents, Cabinet members and United States Senators and a third of our representatives.

Third- to help you in the conservation of health.

Too many people are but half alive and too many die too soon. I hope you have gained in school a conception of health control that will guide you in keeping your bodies vigorous and strong, your homes which you will build one day, sanitary and wholesome and enable you to have a beneficial influence on the improvement of health conditions in the community where you live. And I want you to learn more concerning this important subject.

Fourth- to be builders of worth while homes

in the golden opportunities which lie before you there is none more worth while than that you shall build true homes where boys and girls like you may be given better chances than even you have had. True education must give training in home building.

Fifth- to use your leisure in a worthwhile way. It is the duty of education to teach you to use your

spare time to advantage and to entertain yourself. God pity the boy or girl who is miserable when alone. Would I have you play? Yes. Every sort of clean and wholesome game that will take your mind from the cares of life and so fit you to take them up with fresh strength anew. Likewise I want you to enjoy attending sports of all sorts and shows which properly entertain and instruct.

I would have you read widely history, biography, in fact all sorts of books and magazines. To most of you much travel will be denied but with Parkman you may follow the Oregon trail, with Mark Twain steam up the Mississippi, with Dana you may sail to California in the early days, with Stanley you may penetrate the fastnesses of Africa. Thus thru books and magazines such as the "National Geographic" you may visit all parts of the world and revel in the strange customs of the people and the magnificence of world wonders.

I would have you thru the newspapers and some such magazine as the Literary Digest keep informed on the topics of current interest so that you may be able to discuss them intelligently and helpfully.

I would have you familiar with Huck Finn and David Copperfield and Little Nell and Leatherstocking and the Three Musketeers and with the thousand and one characters which wait for us in the pages of fiction.

I would have you steep your souls in the beautiful poems of all ages that you may find comfort in their beauty when the world seems hard and cruel. I would have you read the Bible till its beauty and majesty have become a part of your life. I would have you trained



to enjoy good music and good pictures. And above all I would have you learn to love the beauties of the sunsets and the flowers and the hills that you may find rest for mind and soul and body in the contemplation of the beauties of nature about you.

Sixth- To help you be a more useful citizen.

Your nation and state and community need you as trained men and women in every phase of life of public life.

The church needs you in its struggle to forward the ideals of Jesus and to bring peace to the souls of men. Politics needs you as voters with a conscience who will stand for the right regardless of party and personal friendship.

Education needs you as teachers and community workers that those who come after you may have better opportunities. It is thru your interest and work that there is to come the day when the out of date schoolhouse shall be but a memory and when our boys and girls of Gallatin county shall all be privileged to attend a school building pleasing to look at from the outside with a big playground with space for games and for trees and flowers

its interior equipped with proper desks, bookcases, maps and charts, an abundance of pure water at hand, a heating system which will heat all parts of the room uniformly, proper light in all parts of the room, a musical instrument to teach musical appreciation, the walls tinted a pleasing color and decorated with a few copies of good pictures, a school building in short where a child may spend half of his waking hours from the ages of six to fourteen in surroundings that will be a blessing rather than a curse.

*in this way  
of class instruction  
and demonstration  
and interest.*



The last aim in education that I would mention is to train in moral ideals. I hope your teachers have instilled into you ideals of service. I want you to help bear your brother's burdens, to deal fairly and justly with your fellows, to be willing to live as the Master of Men who came not to be ministered unto but to minister.

God is to be served by serving men... Remember Sir Launfal sought in vain for the Holy Grail until he ministered to the beggar at the castle gate. Recall if you will the story of the other wise man. He sold all his possessions and bought three wonderful jewels to lay at the feet of the King and as he searched thru a lifetime in vain he gave them one by one for the needs of suffering humanity. Aged, worn out with wanderings in a fruitless quest for the King we see him in Jerusalem at last feeling that he has failed in life because he has used his gifts intended for the King in the service of men. We see him as wounded by a falling stone he sinks down to die and we hear him murmur "Not so my Lord, when saw I thee an hungered and gave thee to eat or thirsty and gave thee to drink, naked and clothed thee or sick and in prison and came unto thee. All my life have I sought thee but never have I seen thee or served thee O my King." And we hear the answering voice from Heaven "In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me". And a smile of perfect peace and content comes upon the old man's face for he has found the King. Even so you may find the King thru serving those about you.

One last word. I would sum up the rules for a successful live for you thus.

Be willing to work.

Be honest

Use your time wisely and well

Make your daily prayer that your life may be useful and that you may be a blessing to those about you.

I wish for you that you may have wealth and distinction if that is your dream, but more than that that what ever your station in life you may render service that will entitle you to live forever in the hearts of your friends. May God bless you and keep you and use you.